135. Requirements of the Minachil taluk.

Mr. V. K. Kesava Pillai (Member, Minachil Taluk) said that most of the inhabitants of the taluk were agriculturists and that they stood in need of scientific help in the matter of cultivation. In view to minimising the large importation of paddy into the State it was desirable that ways and means should be found for increasing its local output. The first step in that direction was to educate the ryots and for that purpose an agricultural farm was necessary. The taluk was subject to the cocoanut pest, and although it had now been prevalent for the past two decades, no effective steps had been taken to check the spread of the disease. The result was that the disease which first began its inroads on the coastal taluks, had now secured a firm hold on the interior taluks of the State like Minachil, and, if its course of destruction was not arrested, the cocoanut gardens in the taluk would soon disappear. The people, therefore, required immediate relief in the matter. The suggestion that he had to make with a view to secure immunity from the pest was the opening of an experimental farm like the one at Alleppey or Ochira where the ryots might be taught effective methods for preventing the spread of the disease. The third agricultural need was the establishment of a farm for the scientific and improved cultivation of pepper which was the chief crop of the taluk and which had of late become subject to the ravages of the pest. The cultivators of the pepper vine stood in need of instruction and advice as to how best to combat the disease.

The Member then represented the need for the improvement of means of communications in the taluk which at present was not adequately served by roads. The Member in that connection invited the attention of the Government to the following works :

1. *Lalam-Punjar road.*—That was one of the main roads of the taluk. During the rainy season it was subject to inundation and carriages could not move along on account of slush and mud. The road should be improved and metalled.

2. *Lalam- Todupuzha road.*—That road was also in the same condition, and the Member thanked the Government for the provision made in the budget of 1098 to improve it.

3. *Lalam- Ponkunnam road.*—That road was also in a deplorable condition and it had been inspected by the Chief Engineer who seemed to be convinced of the necessity for improving it.

4. *Erattupetta-Kanjirapalli road.*—For the repair and improvement of that road a sum of Rs. 19,900 was sanctioned, out of which Rs. 17,433 appeared to have been spent in 1096 and Rs. 1,000 in 1097, while a sum of Rs. 1,500 had been provided in the budget for 1098. The Member, however, added that he seriously doubted whether the amounts mentioned above were really spent.

The Member suggested that the best method of utilising the maintenance and other grants for public works would be to entrust the contract for the execution of such works to local inhabitants of status and influence.

Next, speaking about ryots' roads, the Member said that the road from Bharananganam to Titanad *via* Vilangupara *kadavu* was cut by the people in 1095. The Member expressed the gratitude of the people to the Government for having ordered its maintenance by the D. P. W. But as great hardship was being felt during the rainy season, the required bridges should soon be put up. At one spot on the road a ferry was necessary. The Pinnaknad-Vazhamattam road should be maintained in proper condition. The Vazhamattam-Bharananganam road and the Lalam-Ramapuram road also stood in immediate need of repair. There were a few other roads also which had been constructed by the people and which should be taken up for maintenance by the department.

The Member next said that, in many cases, portions of ancient *ayacut* holdings—mostly those bordering on rivers and canals—were recorded as *parambokes* in the last settlement, with the result that many an innocent ryot was now being

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proceeded against by the Revenue authorities for alleged encroachments. He, therefore, requested that such *bona fide* and old possessions might be registered in the names of the actual holders without levying *tharavila*.

He then observed that the report that the Bharananganam English School, the only Government institution of the kind in the taluk, had been transferred to the control of one particular community had met with strong disapproval from other communities as well as from a large section of the very same community. The parties concerned had already represented their grievances to Government. It was understood that the girls' school at Bharananganam was also to be dealt with likewise. The Member thought that this proposal was as inadvisable as the first.

Mr. Joseph Thomas (Member, Minachil Taluk) first prayed for the construction of a bridge across the Minachil river, on the Lalam-Ponkunnam road. He said that, though his taluk contributed about Rs. 3 lakhs to the State revenue, Government were spending but little on its needs, and that there were only 60 miles of ill-maintained roads for an area of over 138 square miles. The bridge prayed for was a most pressing necessity for which an estimate had been called for as early as 1088. A sum of Rs. 44,200 was sanctioned for the purpose in 1098 and it was promised that the work would be taken up without delay. Nevertheless, the work had not yet been commenced, although as many as fourteen representations had been made on the subject at successive sessions of the Assembly.

Another need of the taluk was the opening of an English School for girls. He quoted satistics in support of his statement and said that such a school was an urgent necessity.

Dewan's reply.—With regard to *porambokes*, there is already a Government order. If a particular land has been in the possession of a private person from the time of the *ayacut*, the land must ordinarily be registered in his name free of compensation.

In regard to schools, the policy of the Government has already been enunciated.

As regards roads, local contractors do the work in Minachil. Contractors from Kottayam do not go to Minachil.

Member.—The maistries attend to the work.

Dewan.—Maistries are not contractors. Let the local respectable contractors come forward. Then the Chief Engineer will give them the contracts. If any subordinate officers of the department do not do their work properly you should bring it to the notice of the Chief Engineer or the Executive Engineer.

As regards pepper and cocoanut farms, there is no use in running them without conducting the necessary investigation beforehand. We shall have to investigate first the causes of the diseases and then discover suitable remedies for them. The Government Mycologist is now in Europe. He was carrying on some investigation. He will be back shortly. He must study the conditions, discover the proper remedies, and apply them practically. It is only after all this is done that experimental farms can be established. No farm has yet been established for the cocoanut or the pepper disease.

Member.—There is one cocoanut farm at Alleppey.

Dewan.—That is to demonstrate to the people how the cocoanut palm should be cultivated, how it should be planted, what should be the distance between the plants, what sort of manure should be applied, and so on. We have also given a grant to Mr. Thomas of Pallikkal because he runs a cocoanut demonstration farm. There the object is different. It is not for the purpose of finding out remedies for the cocoanut disease, but for demonstrating improved methods of cultivation.

I have already answered many of the other suggestions.

In regard to the bridge, steps will be taken to begin construction by 1999.

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In regard to English Schools, the policy of establishing departmental schools has been stopped. If private schools are started, they will get all the grants for which they are eligible under the Education Code.

136. Some matters relating to Minachil.

Mr. A. C. Kuriakose (Member, Nominated) thanked the Dewan for having promised to arrange for the bridge work across the Lalam river being started early next year and for the Bharananganam-Vazhamattam and the Vazhamattam-Pinnaknad roads being taken up for departmental maintenance. The Member then said that he proposed to speak on the following topics, *viz.*, (1) public works; (2) education; and (3) administration of criminal justice. Under the first head, he prayed for the following works.

A. Roads and bridges.—(1) The metalling of the Lalam-Todupuzha road which had already been sanctioned should be commenced at an early date and the road maintained in proper condition.

(2) The Lalam-Kadutturutti road and the road from Antinad to Piravittanam from the 4th mile, Lalam-Todupuzha road and the branch road which joined the Ampara-Munkompu road at the Plasanal Church *via* Piravittanam should be completed and taken over for departmental maintenance. A portion of each of those roads had already been cut by the people.

(3) The Lalam-Ramapuram road should be completed without delay.

(4) A bridge should be constructed at Erattupetta on the Lalam-Punjar road. There was at present a cartable road from Erattupetta to Punjar Church, 3 miles long. A road in continuation of it for 2½ miles had already been cut by the people, but it was not cartable. There was then a break to a distance of 2 miles, beyond which there was another road, 3 miles long, cut by Mr. P. T. Thomas which led to his estate, Chottikayil. The Member requested that the break of 2 miles referred to above might be converted into a cartable road. Besides being useful to the inhabitants of a large number of villages, it would join the Kottayam-Kumili road at the 31st mile stone.

(5) A trace from Punjar to the 31st mile, on the Kottayam-Kumili road, should be opened and made cartable as it would connect several important trading centres like Punjar, Erattupetta, Bharananganam, Pala, Cherpunkal and Kitangur with Mundakayam.

(6) A small bridge should also be constructed connecting Erattupetta with the Erattupetta-Kanjirapalli road.

B. Canals—The Member next prayed for the construction of a canal about two miles long from the Kattachira canal to Manjur-Murikkumchuvatu *thodu* connecting the Kanakkari *chira* and crossing the M. C. road. That canal would be of great use to the public as it would irrigate about 15,000 acres of paddy lands which lay almost fallow for want of fresh water. Further, it was calculated to prevent the submersion of the Ettumanur-Lalam road during the rainy season. Under the Member's proposal, the canal would also become capable of bringing under cultivation another 15,600 acres of *kari* lands in the Vaikam taluk, if it could be extended to a length of about 1½ miles to those lands. In the result, the Member said that, if only that canal was opened, it would bring about 2,14,200 *paras* of paddy lands under double crop cultivation.

Speaking about the educational requirements of the taluk, the Member stated that there were in the taluk one English High School and 5 Middle Schools under private management and that they were prepared to take up and manage even the single English Middle School now maintained by Government. Of the 124 vernacular schools for boys, 41 were Government and the remaining 83 private institutions, and except the one building for the school at Palai all the remaining school buildings were put up by the people. Such being the peoples' contribution towards the spread of education in the taluk, the Member prayed for educational help in the following directions.

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